

MINUTES MARCH 24, 2004 MEETING

The monthly meeting was called to order at 9:38 A.M. Present were Commissioners Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Alexander E. Corbett, III, Superintendent Robert P. Gardiner, DPW Director Peter J. Castanino and Administrative Assistant Nancy T. Fay. Martha Moore also attended as the League of Women Voters Observer. Commissioner Charles R. Johnson was absent.

The Minutes of the February 25, 2004 Meeting were unanimously approved. Superintendent Gardiner made a clarification that utilities on pole #87 on Concord Avenue near the Highland Meadow Cemetery entrance have not been moved yet. A new pole #87 on the opposite side of the street at the corner of Somerset Street has been installed, but the wiring has not yet been transferred to the new pole.

Budget and Operations: While the Grounds-Keeping Supplies line item appears to have considerable funding remaining, it will be used to purchase supplies such as lime, fertilizer, mulch, seed which we do not have room to store in quantity. The actual balance currently is \$4,619 due to supplies for which funds have been committed.

Superintendent Gardiner reported that there have been 87 burials to date this fiscal year. Of the total, 26 were cremations, 61 were casket burials and 45 (55%) were non-residents. Revenue to date is \$84,306 or \$8,721 more than last fiscal year at this time.

Superintendent Gardiner reported that the Annual Planting and Memorial Tree Program would be publicized again this spring to promote beautification. He is checking on the purchase of a Coral Burst Flowering Crab tree.

Superintendent Gardiner reported that Halvorson Design Partnership, Inc. (the cemetery's landscape architect) was awarded a merit award at the Boston Society of Landscape Architects meeting for the *Master Plan of Highland Meadow Cemetery*. An awards ceremony is scheduled for late April. The Board was extremely enthusiastic and will contact Halvorson to congratulate them.

Chairman Cushman noted that the canopy rentals were low and genealogy reports were up. She wondered if other Town departments might use the canopy if they knew it were available for Town functions.

Superintendent Gardiner was asked to contact the Town Administrator to determine if we were authorized one or two seasonal employees. The last Board of Selectmen meeting left the Commissioners and Mr. Gardiner with questions about recommendations.

Director Castanino stated he had met with all cemetery employees and others he had not met with before and explained his plan for the newly formed Department of

Public Works. He said the meeting was productive and he had received several questions and presented his plan to the employees. He told them his door was always open and he would welcome their comments and suggestions.

Chairman Cushman reminded all that our prices had not increased for two years and offered to run the numbers again to determine the impact of the FY05 expense budget on the prices. She'll try to run them for the May meeting. Changes in prices usually are done effective at the beginning of a new fiscal year. Ms. Fay and Mr. Gardiner will gather the price lists for area cemeteries as usual.

Community Service Opportunities:

Chairman Cushman reported that Belmont High School has a requirement for students to perform community service prior to graduation. She wondered if they might be used to, for example, plant geraniums. While this is a possibility, the time they would be available to do various tasks and use of Town equipment could create a problem with the union. Chairman Cushman also stated that she had been contacted by a Boy Scout leader. The Eagle Scouts have single projects and the troop performs continuing service projects. She asked Mr. Gardiner to discuss the possibilities with the cemetery staff and come up with some project ideas. Director Peter J. Castanino reported that he had been contacted by the Home for Little Wanderers in Watertown informing him they do provide community service and come with an adult supervisor. Superintendent Gardiner reported he had contacted Belmont's Youth Service Officer to tell her we would be happy to have the youth do community service in the cemetery (i.e. picking up debris, straightening flags, etc.) to fulfill their requirement for service. There is also a prisoners' detail from the local prison, which is available for work, but the Town must provide coffee breaks and lunch for the workers. Specific details will be discussed and decisions made at the May meeting.

Land Management Committee Issues:

At the combined meeting of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals last month, Tower Ventures II was not fully prepared to answer questions and the meeting did not come to closure. A follow up meeting will be held April 8th, and Tim Higgins is working closely with the company to be sure they are prepared with all relevant data prior to attending the next meeting.

The ARC case is still pending, but there is no clear feeling about which way the case will go in Land Court (there are soft issues on both sides) or when a decision is expected.

The Town and Northland have requested the Interveners in the sewer complaint to delete those items not directly related to sewers in order to proceed more efficiently.

Pricing Policy Discussion. The May meeting of the Commissioners will be to discuss pricing issues. Chairman Cushman will check with pricing experts for guidance and perhaps assistance, but the main issue facing any decision is Perpetual Care both at the Grove Street site and at Highland Meadow. The commissioners need to determine how to balance pricing and cover the costs of Grove Street, partially or fully. Should new purchasers at Highland Meadow pay more to absorb the costs of perpetual care on Grove Street?

Martha Moore asked if a sliding scale for payment could be devised stating that Highland Meadow would compare to the best cemeteries in the area and affluent people may be willing to pay more. Chairman Cushman stated that we could charge more for certain areas in the new cemetery and less for other. There will be a woodland area, a meadow area, a cremation area and a scattering area so at least four prices are probable. When the new cemetery is open, pricing plans will be available, particularly for those purchasing in advance of need. The last time we checked figures, homeowners were paying .12 cents per household on the tax rate for perpetual care at Grove Street.

The next meeting was scheduled for the week of May 3rd, with exact date/time to be announced. No meeting was scheduled for April. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexander E. Corbett, III, Clerk